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## THE LOVE OF NATURE IN VIRGIL

### I

(Concluded from page 51)

The matter in hand—the Roman's affectionate remembrance of his birthplace, and the unending interest of that birthplace in the man's career—may be illustrated further by Cicero, *De Legibus* 2.1-4 (the speakers are Atticus, represented below by *A.*, and Cicero, represented by *M.*):

*A.* Sed visne, quoniam et satis iam ambulatum est et tibi aliud dicendi initium sumendum est, locum mutemus et in insula, quae est in Fibreno—nam, opinor, id illi alteri flumini nomen est—sermoni reliquo demus operam sedentes? *M.* Sane quidem, nam illo loco libentissime soleo uti, sive quid mecum ipse cogito sive aliquid scribo aut lego. *A.* Equidem, qui nunc potissimum huc venerim, satiari non queo, magnificasque villas et pavimenta marmorea et laqueata tecta contemno: ductus vero aquarum, quos isti Nilos et Euripos vocant, quis non, cum haec videat, irriserit? Itaque, ut tu paulo ante de lege et de iure disserens ad naturam referebas omnia, sic in his ipsis rebus, quae ad requietem animi delectationemque quaeruntur, natura dominatur. Qua re antea mirabar—nihil enim his in locis nisi saxa et montes cogitabam, itaque ut facerem et orationibus inducebar tuis et versibus—sed mirabar, ut dixi, te tam valde hoc loco delectari: nunc contra miror te, cum Roma absis, usquam potius esse. *M.* Ego vero, cum licet pluris dies abesse, praesertim hoc tempore anni, et amoenitatem et salubritatem hanc sequor, raro autem licet. Sed nimirum me alia quoque causa delectat, quae te non attingit ita. *A.* Quae tandem ista causa est? *M.* Quia, si verum dicimus, haec est mea et huius fratris mei germana patria, hinc enim orti stirpe antiquissima sumus; hic sacra, hic genus, hic maiorum multa vestigia. Quid plura? hanc vides villam, ut nunc quidem est, lautius aedificatam patris nostri studio, qui cum esset infirma valetudine, hic fere aetatem egit in litteris. Sed hoc ipso in loco, cum avos viveret et antiquo more parva esset villa, . . . me scito esse natum. Qua re inest nescio quid et latet in animo ac sensu meo quo me plus hic locus fortasse delectet, si quidem etiam ille sapientissimus vir Ithacam ut videret immortalitatem scribitur repudiasset. *A.* Ego vero tibi istam iustam causam puto, cur huc libentius venias atque hunc locum diligas. Quin ipse, vere dicam, sum illi villae amior modo factus atque huic omni solo, in quo tu ortus et procreatus es. Movemur enim nescio quo pacto locis ipsis in quibus eorum quos diligimus aut admiramur adsunt vestigia. Me quidem ipsae illae nostrae Athenae non tam operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artibus delectant quam recordatione summorum virorum, ubi quisque habitare, ubi sedere, ubi disputare sit solitus, studiosaeque eorum etiam sepulchra contempler. Qua re istum ubi tu es natus plus amabo posthac locum.

All this makes us understand better Vergil's innumerable references to places in Italy, especially the references grouped together in that famous passage, *Aeneid*

7. 601-817, which Dr. Warde Fowler has so well discussed in his book, *Virgil's "Gathering of the Clans"* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1916). Part of his general introductory comment on this passage must be set down here (27-28):

Virgil's methods, whether in poetic architecture or poetic expression, were never entirely simple; and in this pageant we find the usual complexity. Here the most obvious motive in the poet's craft is the wish to move the feeling of his Italian reader as he sees the stately procession of Italian warriors passing before him, or perchance to fill his mind with pride and pleasure at finding among them the ancient representatives of his own city or district. Italians have always been curiously proud of the reputation of their birthplace; even in our own time they have searched Mommsen's "*History of Rome*" for some allusion to their homes, and treasured up the reference with gratitude. "*Ha parlato bene dal nostro paese*", they would exclaim, as he travelled through their town in later days.

The reference to Mommsen in the foregoing quotation is illuminated by a passage in Dr. Fowler's latest book, *Roman Essays and Interpretations*, 257 (Oxford University Press, 1920). In a lecture entitled *Theodor Mommsen: His Life and Work* (250-268), Dr. Fowler has occasion, on pages 256-258, to describe Mommsen's work in Italy, in gathering inscriptions. In the performance of this work Mommsen travelled all over Italy, gaining a thorough knowledge of its geography, agriculture, history, and mastering completely its language. After the publication of his *History of Rome* he "was almost adored by the Italian people".

It is time to return to Sir Archibald Geikie's remarks upon Vergil. On page 61 he reminds us that Vergil spent the first thirty years or more of his life in his native district. Later Vergil removed to Campania, to the neighborhood of Naples, and he spent much time in Sicily.

The most important influence on Virgil's poetic powers which his transference to Campania brought with it, was that of the Sea. He may not improbably in his youth have seen the Adriatic, though his references to it in his earlier poetry may have been mainly inspired by Theocritus. At least, if he ever beheld the sea while he lived in the north, its surface seems to have left on his mind an impression of mirror-like calm, with only a gentle murmur of breaking wavelets. On the shores of Campania, however, he had an opportunity of watching the sea in all its moods, not only of calm but of storm, and this experience gave a new feeling and a fresh set of images and reflections to the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*.

On pages 62-63 Sir Archibald Geikie discusses the famous passage, *Georgics* 2.475-486, in which Vergil considers the two possible ways of treating nature—the

Lucretian way, which involved an understanding of the *causae rerum* as well as emotional appreciation of nature, the other the way of him who enjoys nature, whether he understands her or not (for an excellent discussion of this passage see J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome*, 453-454). Sir Archibald Geikie insists that there was no room, in Vergil's day, for another didactic poem on the philosophy of nature (63). On pages 63-65 he writes:

. . . . In choosing rural scenes as his theme he took the subject which was most familiar and congenial to him, one which was well worthy of his ambition, and which he loved with the deepest affection of his gentle and meditative nature. . . . He pointed out to his fellow-countrymen and to all succeeding generations in every land the endless beauties of nature, and showed by his own immortal example the empire which these charms can obtain over an appreciative and sympathetic soul.

. . . it is in his . . . *Eclogues*, that the personality of the poet comes out most clearly. . . . The *Eclogues* bring us into touch with Virgil in his early home, among the landscapes which left such a deep impression on his memory. The whole atmosphere of these poems is that of the country, and especially of the district in which the poet was born and bred . . . though Arcadian and Sicilian scenes were on his lips, it was his own Italian landscape that filled his eye and heart and inspired his muse. He even appeals to it by name <7. 11-13>—"hither across the meadows will the young oxen come to drink; here Mincius fringes his green banks with slender reeds, and from yonder sacred oak comes the hum of bees".

We can picture the little farm as he traces its boundaries from where the hills begin to descend with gentle slope to the edge of the water, and the line of venerable beech-trees with their doddered tops. The landscape, although curiously compounded of Transpadane Sicilian and Greek features, is made to stand clearly before us where, among familiar streams and sacred springs, the old farmer would still be left in peace, with the murmur of bees in his willow hedge, the woodman's song from the foot of the neighbouring cliff, the cooing of his wood-pigeons, and the moan of the turtle-dove from the tall elm-tree. The soothing melody of these poems could not have been more aptly described than in the words of one of the personages in the fifth *Eclogue*—"Thy song, divine poet, has been to me as sleep on the grass to weary men, or as a stream of water leaping forth in the heat to quench our thirst".

On pages 66-70, Sir Archibald Geikie discusses the *Georgics*.

The poet's boyhood and youth had given him an intimate knowledge of the life of the farmer and a warm feeling for the trials which, even in so favoured a country as Italy, affected farming. In his poem he amply recognizes the laborious and unintermittent toil of the husbandman, in which he himself had taken part. The struggle with Nature, wherein man is not always the victor, enlisted Virgil's heartiest sympathy, and gave the keynote to the whole poem. This sympathy formed an element in that wide affection, through the halo of which he looked out upon the world. It gave warmth and force to his love of all that was tender and beautiful in Nature, and from time to time that love seems to burst forth as an uncontrollable emotion which demands expression in his verse. Thus in the midst of his observations on the different parts of farm-routine, the suggested remembrance of some autumn or spring, some noon-tide or storm, some flower or tree,

fills his soul with rapture which finds vent in words as vivid and beautiful as the vision that inspired them. These occasional outbursts of imaginative splendour form one of the greatest charms of the poem.

Virgil was thoroughly convinced that in spite of here and there thin or ungenial soil, or inclement season, or insect-plagues, or other too numerous evils, there was no lot throughout all the range of human employments more to be envied than that of a man who has to till the soil or to rear flocks and herds. And to illustrate how far this lot is preferable to that of the sailor, the courtier, the soldier, the merchant, or the politician, he drew the well-known and inimitable panegyric on the blessings of rural life and the enviable position of the old style farmer—a passage the musical beauty of which is lost in translation <*Georgics* 2.458-471, 513-515, 523-528>.

The concluding lines of this passage with their reference to the religious ceremonies that mingled with the festivities of the country-folk is characteristically Virgilian. His natural piety and conservative instincts led him to stand by the old national faith, against the spirit of irreligion so rife in the society of his day. The *Georgics* are full of the indications of this piety. His was no "vana superstitio veterumque ignara deorum". Amidst his precepts for the work of the farm, and his expressions of delight in the manifold beauties of Nature there ever mingles a recognition of higher powers that watch over mankind, and to whom were owing the devout reverence and the due offerings prescribed by the established religion of the country. At the same time he was fully cognisant of the Stoic doctrine of the "anima mundi", and refers to it towards the end of the poem (IV. 219), but without positively adopting it, or giving it the solemn sanction with which he afterwards clothed it in the *Aeneid*.

Intimately bound up with his piety towards the national gods was Virgil's ardent patriotism . . . He loved Italy with the deepest devotion of his emotional nature. While he was keenly sensitive to the beauty of Italian landscape, and delighted in the yearly proof of the fertility of the Italian soil, these feelings were intensified by the fact that all this beauty and fertility belonged to his native land. He depicted the scenes for their own intrinsic charm, but that charm was heightened by the warm glow of his patriotism. It is as much in this ardent national enthusiasm as in any other part of his work that the suggested Celtic temperament may perhaps be traced.

That this enthusiasm was thoroughly genuine and spontaneous cannot be questioned. At the same time there appears to be no doubt that the subject of the *Georgics* was suggested to Virgil by his appreciative patron, Maecenas. The policy of Augustus to encourage agriculture and industry with a view towards healing the wounds caused by the civil wars and reuniting and strengthening the bonds of society, was loyally supported by his able minister. Maecenas might naturally think that a serious poem dealing with rural life and the aspects of the country, written as only the poet of the *Eclogues* could write it, would be popular all over Italy, and would be an influence that might help in the fulfilment of the Emperor's designs. Augustus also took a serious view of the growing deterioration of the religious and moral standard of the community, and exerted himself with great energy to restore the national religion, building temples, reviving rituals that had fallen into disuse, and in other ways trying to stem the advancing current of indifference and impiety. From this point of view, also, Maecenas might well conceive that the pious and conservative spirit of Virgil might be of service if enlisted in the cause of reform. The poet, without in the least sacrificing any of his convictions or

tastes, could honestly devote himself to promote the laudable ends which the Emperor had so much at heart. It might, indeed, nerve him to higher exertion if he felt that in giving the fullest expression to his passionate love of the country, to his sympathy with all rural labour, and to his reverent piety, he was at the same time taking part in the great imperial effort to reform and regenerate the Roman people.

C. K.

### VERGIL'S TEACHINGS ON REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IN THE AFTER LIFE

A study of the development of the belief in the immortality of the soul is a far-reaching as well as a fascinating subject. The limits of space and of the subject of this paper prevent us from discussing how the conviction of immortality became established in the course of time through observation of natural phenomena and through processes of ratiocination. We can only consider briefly this belief in its developed form.

There are two principal theories as to the state and the habitat of the soul after death: one, that it resides with the body, the other, that it goes to some other final resting-place. The Egyptians appear to have accepted both theories and to have believed that each person had two souls. One of these went over the burning African sands on a long journey beyond some body of water, to appear before the judgment throne of Osiris. It was the Ka, or other soul, which remained with the body, that appeared as a ghost to the living, or visited one with dreams. Those who held the belief that the soul resided with the body developed, from this starting-point, some interesting theories. For example, the Egyptians practised embalming, for the reason that, if the body could not be preserved forever, the soul would have no place in which to reside and so must perish. Embalming was adopted, therefore, to guarantee the immortality of the soul. Other peoples, in Africa and Asia, and elsewhere, perhaps, believed that, after the body decayed and disappeared, the soul could no longer reside in it, but left it, to seek a habitation elsewhere. Still others believed that the soul left the body at death and took up its residence elsewhere, e. g. in a tree, as is believed by certain African tribes of to-day, or in some animal. In the latter belief, no doubt, there is discovered the basis of the belief in metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls.

The majority of the primitive beliefs of Asia and Africa adhere to or are modified from the belief that the soul does not go to some distant place, but remains in the same locality with the body of the departed, in that body, or in forms of vegetation, or transmigrates to animals. The other tradition—that the soul journeyed to some distant place after the death of the body—was commonly held by the Aryan races and by some Semitic peoples, such as the Hebrews. The Greeks and the Romans of the historical period held that the soul migrated to some remote place. They speak of the soul's going to *hades*—the unknown place; but later

the word *hades* was transferred to the god who presided over this region. The Greeks also spoke of the Isles of the Blest, and, as the Greeks migrated into the Balkan peninsula from the North, they probably brought along with them this conception, which is similar to that held by the Scandinavian and the Teutonic peoples, who thought that the souls of warriors and heroes went to *Helheim*, the house of *Hel*, the Unseen.

Was the cradle of the Aryan peoples to the East of the Caspian Sea? The Greeks and other peoples brought with them the belief that the soul reached the Isles of the Blest or the Elysian Fields after traveling westward over an expanse of water, and the Greeks employed a figure of speech when they said that *dying* was passing over the body of water or river of death, just as the Hebrews spoke of going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. A more plausible theory, to my mind, is that dying can be compared to the close of a day, or to the setting sun; as the sun ends his daily career in the West, so people got the idea that they too ended their life's work by disappearing somewhere in the West. At any rate, the euphemism for death used by soldiers in the Great War, 'Going West', is a phrase resurrected out of the remote past.

In the course of time, the Greeks transferred the Isles of the Blest to the Elysian Fields and placed them in *Hades's* realm. The important thing to notice is that the Northern peoples and the Greeks as well as others had reached the point where they no longer believed that the souls of all, the good and the bad, went indiscriminately to the same abode. The fact that they invented a *Walhalla* for warriors and heroes indicates that they thought that courage deserved some reward. Courage thus emerges in the dim past as the first recognized virtue. This very conclusion makes a Heaven and a Hell inevitable and it would be extremely interesting to show in what order other virtues were recognized by the appearance of the belief that people who practised them should receive a reward in the next world.

This thought brings up the question of the connection of religion and morality. As a general proposition it can be stated that some religions taught little or no morality, while others taught considerable morality, and that the tendency has been more and more to make the two inseparable and exactly coincident.

There was little or no morality, as we to-day understand morals, in nature-worship, and the practice of sex-worship would appear highly immoral to us. However, as these practices were called for in those days by the tenets of cults, they seemed perfectly moral then, for morals are simply the customs of the times, according to the etymology of the word. We can perhaps assert that no form of religion which deals only with the relations and the duties of men to gods can be expected to afford any important moral precepts by which men's actions towards their fellows may be guided. But, as soon as we find a religion, such as Confucianism, Hebraism, or Christianity, which teaches man's duties